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THE MIND OF E INDIAN GOVERNMENT

BY

BERNARD HOUGHTON, I. C. S.

(Retired)

Late of the Burma Commission

THE INCURABLE VICE

of a foreign Government is that it responds to the suggestion of foreigners and not to the suggestion of the people of the land. Is any Nation good enough to rule another people? Be the Ideals they profess never so exalted, you may be very sure that self-interest and group suggestion acting on their minds will so warp their Judgment : that what was begun in benevolence :

WILL END IN TYRANNY

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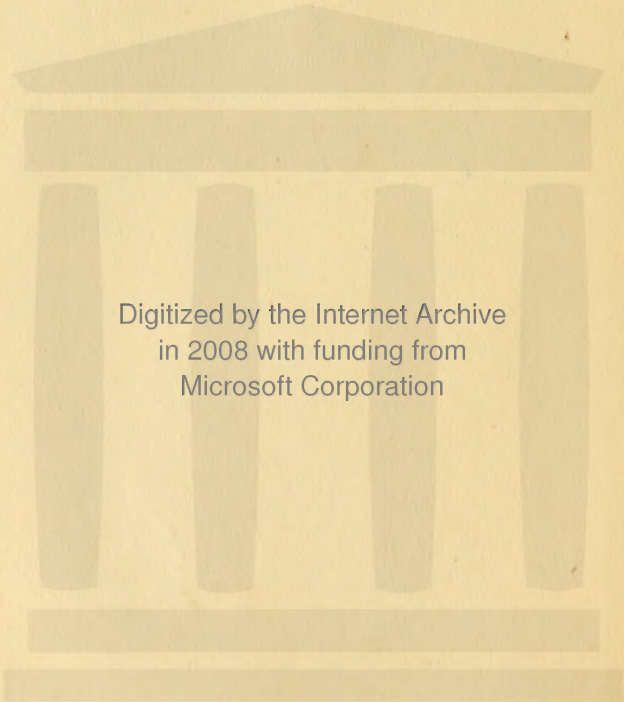

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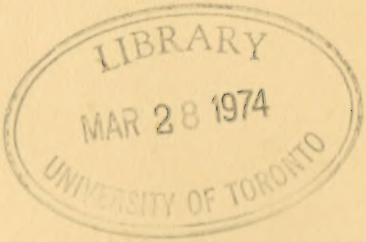

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THE MIND OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER I

THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND

THE constant stream of books on modern Psychology proves the intense interest now felt in this subject. Indeed of late years no branch of knowledge has made so wonderful a leap forward or promises such a revolution in human affairs as the Science of the Mind. Till nearly the end of last century it had lingered merely as a preserve of the University Professors with their dry-as-dust phraseology and their aloofness from the living world

of men. Mr. James, the American, did much, by bringing it into touch with real life, to rescue it from the shelves of the libraries. His "Talks to Teachers" for instance, is still well worth study. But it is from the discovery of the Unconscious Mind by the Austrian, Freud, that modern psychology really dates. That discovery —probably the greatest since Darwin published his doctrine of evolution— made as dead as alchemy nearly all that had been written before; it opened out vistas absolutely new. Like Columbus, Freud had discovered a new world.

To understand all that this event means, we must realise that the human mind is divided into two, or more properly, into three parts, the Conscious, the Fore-Conscious, and the Unconscious, of which the latter is by far the greatest. In the Conscious mind we know and reason in the

present; it is also the seat of the ideas we receive from our social surroundings. The Fore-Conscious holds the more immediate memories, things which we recollect as a matter of course, such as reading, writing, etc. The Unconscious contains our memories proper, our emotions and all those dim racial and egoistic ideas which we inherit from our human and half-human ancestors.

The Conscious, actuated by its social environment, plays the Censor over the more primitive parts of the mind, but in sleep this Censorship is in abeyance. Hence the great importance now attached to dreams, through which the Unconscious signifies its wishes, repressed during our waking hours. In very young children or in primitive savages the dream relates our actual wish. But in all other human beings the wish is incorporated,

interwoven as it were, in the events of the past day. Moreover it is so symbolised that we do not recognise it, because its open expression might horrify and awaken the sleeper. The symbolism of dreams is now well understood; through dreams are revealed and laid bare the childish egoism, the barbarism and the immorality which lie buried deep in the unconscious self. To relate our dreams to any one skilled in psycho-analysis is in fact to disclose our inmost nature. "*The man of primitive times lives on, unchanged, in our Unconscious.*"

Through the new psychology, we gain the key not only to compulsion and other neuroses, but to our behaviour in every day life and above all to forgetfulness. When we experience some unpleasant event we try to forget it, that is, we repress it in our unconscious mind. But there the memory

abides. *For the Unconscious never sleeps and never forgets.* The repressed memory gathers round it all memories which are in any way connected with the event and might recall it; this constellation is called a *complex.* When these complexes are numerous, the Unconscious, as it were becomes blocked with them, so that matters are with difficulty recalled. That is what is called a bad memory. If the emotions aroused by such repressed events are great, they try to find expression by displacement or symbolism. They may set up mental conflicts giving rise to all kinds of "nervous" disorders, but, so well disguised are they, that the sufferer rarely suspects the real source of the trouble. Many "nervous" complaints have their origin in childhood, particularly in the first five years of life.

Here is no place to discuss how

mental disease can be cured and the mind generally improved through psycho-analysis or self suggestion. The reader is referred to the various works by Freud, Lay, Bousfield, Baudouin, Adler, Jung, Read and others. In addition to the cure of mental disease, the new psychology has much to teach us in the study of behaviour and in the education and care of children.

Still more important is the light it sheds in the realm of public affairs. Here the cardinal factors to bear in mind are, (1) the primitive nature of the Unconscious and therefore of our emotions, (2) the symbolism and rationalisation of these emotions and the thoughts of the Unconscious in order that they may pass the Censor, and (3) the fact that man is a gregarious animal and very sensitive to suggestion from his group.

The first point has already been touched on. The Unconscious is egoistic, it loves pleasure and hates anything irksome and disagreeable. Unless tutored by the conscious mind, it would spend most of the time in fantasies or day-dreams, divorced from reality. It is innocent of any social taboo or of the restraints which civilisation places on such crimes as murder or robbery. Left to itself, it is as Freud puts it, the prehistoric man. Hence results a continual conflict between the Conscious, as representing civilisation, and the Unconscious, in which the latter frequently, nay usually, has its way unknown to the former.

Imapini a King who thinks he rules absolutely, whereas all the while his decisions are those of a powerful minister who keeps discreetly in the background. That is what happens

daily in the mind of men. Not only, does the Unconscious symbolise its wishes as in dreams, so as to pass the Censor, it does more, it rationalises them, for the Censor is now wide awake and believes he acts by reason. He may believe so, but all the time the Unconscious is deftly suggesting pretexts or excuses in favour of the particular course it desires to follow. Thus the cinemas promote fantasies or the pleasure-thinking so dear to the unconscious; therefore people say they are instructive. Alcohol enables us to escape from realities back to the omnipotence of childhood, so it is "necessary for the system" or "one's health requires a little." Imperial Nations rule others "for their good," in reality to gratify the egotism or the greed of the stronger. "They are unfit to rule themselves" because our childish vanity would be hurt if they

were allowed to become our equals. The list is endless; have we not always a plausible excuse for what we wish?

The key to political psychology is the gregarious nature of man, and this thraldom to group suggestion, but the importance of this fact has not, in spite of the able advocacy of Mr. Trotter been yet fully recognised. Most psychologists have been medical men; they have been too much preoccupied with the individual to glimpse the herd. By gregariousness is meant the love of living in groups, whether classes or tribes or nations. Man is only really happy when he is in the company of others of the same class or people; he is ill at ease when alone. He thus resembles animals like cattle, buffaloes, wild dogs, certain kinds of monkeys and deer. This implies various intuitions or unconscious reactions

in the mind. Have you ever noticed the behaviour of cattle or buffaloes when approached by a tiger? The head at once, as by a hidden impulse, unites so as to form a crescent, with the leader at the apex; it advances in unison, heads up, horns tossing, in a solid phalanx on the foe. There you have group suggestion in action. A gregarious animal has the following characteristics:—

(1) It is more sensitive to the voice of the group than to any other influence.

(2) It is carried away by the passions of the group when excited.

(3) It follows the leader of the group, *provided* he does not think or act very differently from the others.

In man the opinion or voice of the group acts not by reason on the Conscious, but by suggestion on the Unconscious—a very important distinction.

(There are several kinds of suggestion, of which hypnotism is but one.) One does not easily realise this fact because though herd suggestion acts on the emotions in the Unconscious, the latter as usual rationalises its promptings. For instance, though dress is regulated strictly according to group ideas, the member of each group believes his or her national dress—or in Europe the fashion of the moment—to be the most beautiful and hygenic. It may not be either, but that will not affect the opinion of a member of the group because he adopts it not by reason but through suggestion. He regards it as a self-evident truth, which requires no agreement. In religion group suggestion is king, an absolute king. Take the world over and you will find that each person believes his own religion to be the only true one, though in 99 cases out of 100 he accepts it because

he was brought up in a group professing that particular religion. But it is in war that the action of the group is seen at its best and worst. At its best because it inspires men to do acts of immortal heroism, to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their nation. At its worst, because it dethrones reason and reduces millions to the intellectual level of the cave-man. In the Great War, for instance, each nation firmly believed it was acting on the defensive, blindly swallowed the particular lies its chiefs thought best for their own ends, refused to hear any arguments of its adversaries, scoffed at the idea that they had any, was roused to madness by their wickedness and their cruelty. Each nation thought that the happiness of Europe was bound up with its own victory. The atmosphere was that of a lunatic asylum. In all that hell of passion and welter of blood,

where was reason? Where was justice? Where in fact was our boasted civilisation? It was the group or nation first, foremost and all the time. Nothing else mattered. In a flash man was back in the Stone Age, tribe fighting against savage tribe, no thought but to hold closely together, no aim but to kill without pity and without remorse.

Even in peace—let alone the veiled war known as the Peace of Versailles—we can see the working of the war-mind. Whenever the cry is raised "The Country is in danger" or "The interests of our class are threatened," the members of the nation or class at once sink their internal quarrels, unite as one man, and present a solid front to the enemy (or supposed enemy), exactly like a herd of buffaloes when they wind a tiger.

The sharper the threat to safety or

to interests, the more closely does the group feeling approximate to the feeling in a state of war. It is just a question of degree; the principle is the same. There is the same refusal to hear the adversary's case, the same infatuation in the cause of the group, the same horror of the foe, the same belief that hatred and envy alone impels him. Note for example Sir E. Craddock's statement on the 6th December that the Burmese Nationalists were actuated by blind hatred against the British rule. Indeed, as the *Morning Post* proves, the mental condition of the governing classes is, on occasion, not remote from paronoia or delusional insanity. Everywhere they see plots, everywhere conspiracy, everywhere hatred!

CHAPTER II

GROUP SUGGESTION IN HISTORY

WHEN belief in witchcraft was an article of faith in Europe, that is, was received without proof because all around believed it, tens of thousands of innocent citizens—mostly old women—suffered death for this cause at the stake or by the hangman's noose. Cultured men and dainty ladies would go without a qualm to see them burn, so powerful is the effect of herd suggestion. It was the same with heretics, particularly in Spain. In Europe in the middle ages the Churches occupied much the

same place in the thoughts of men as nations do now. Because heretics thought for themselves, they were believed to threaten the existence of the dominant Churches, just as people who aspire to liberty are believed to threaten the existence of Empires. At once the members of the Churches became filled with the war-mind and inspired with ferocious hatred against the heretics. Even if the heretics recanted, it did not always save their lives. They were imprisoned; they were tortured with the ingenuity of devils, they were burnt alive. And multitudes of cultured men and women used to go to see these burnings, which, in Spain, under the name of "Acts of Faith," became quite a popular spectacle. These men and women no more doubted that the burning of heretics was right and proper than Anglo-Indians doubt that

the butchery of Amritsar was right and proper. "The Church, or the Empire is in danger," where is the difference?

Personal slavery all civilised men now repudiate. We hold it a monstrous thing that one man should bind another and compel him like a bullock to work without wages. Yet in nations where slavery was a matter of custom, the master class never hesitated to defend it with passion, nay to regard it as a self-evident proposition. Philosophers from Aristotle downwards, statesmen, bishops and divines, great writers, even philanthropists have upheld it with the same conviction as they would the family or marriage. When in 1860 Lincoln, America's greatest son, attacked slavery, he was denounced by hundreds of papers as something between a baboon and a monster. At an earlier

period Wilberforce in England was assailed quite as savagely for advocating individual liberty as Mahatma Gandhi or Lajpat Rai now are for advocating political liberty.

The people who stood for slavery were in their private lives often honest and virtuous. They sincerely believed that the slaves belonged to an inferior race, incapable of working as freemen, and that ruin would follow their emancipation. But we can now see that they were merely rationalising the suggestion of their particular group. At the bottom it was just greed and the love of power which urged them on and inspired their emotions. Their Unconscious tricked them as it was tricked many a believer in a bad cause, both before and since.

The class war which now rages in many countries between the working

man and the bourgeoisie is perhaps not so different from the slave question as some would fain have us believe. Substitute bourgeoisie for masters and workers for slavery, and you have in essence the same conflict which distracted America sixty years ago. The master class is just as angry with anyone who helps in the betterment of the workers, just as convinced that the present social system is the only possible one, just as deaf to argument and as ready to believe any tale to the detriment of labour.

In the minor religious persecutions which have disgraced for centuries nearly every country in Europe, the members of the persecuting Church have invariably refused to listen to what the others might say either for freedom of worship or for the truth of their particular faith. They have been consumed by an anger as fierce

as that which recently inflamed Germany against England or England against Germany. The Roman Catholic Church in the days when it enjoyed political power, persecuted consistently and persistently members of all other beliefs, but, given the same power, other Churches too, have played the same evil game. Do we find members of these persecuting groups shocked or protesting at what their spiritual leaders did? Not at all, they applauded all this iniquity quite as heartily as Anglo-Indians applaud the present political persecution. Heretics threatened the empire of the Church. That was enough. The group passion was aroused and blotted out from their hearts every spark of justice, every hint of mercy. To this day, despite the quickly waning influence of the Churches, differences of creed still give rise to prejudice

and ill-will between one and another set of Christians.

Just as differences of religion, according to the intensity of the emotion aroused, may beget any evil from the most devilish torture down to mere dislike, so all national feuds by no means confined to overt war. That is only their bloodiest fruit. They may linger on for decades or centuries without any definite explosion, merely a general atmosphere of enmity and prejudice. Take Ireland for example. During the centuries in which England has misgoverned that island, it has suffered many iniquities, from Cromwell's policy of Thorough, from the barbarous Penal Code and cruel land laws, with their tenants-at-will, down to the Black-and-Tan horror of last year. These iniquities the English at home have either ignored or have palliated on the flimsiest grounds.

Why is this? Why do people at most times quite civilised and humane, approve this abominations, nay often boast them to the skies? It is just the group suggestion of the nation, which makes them regard a conquered people exactly as a master regards a slave. If the victims of the sword venture to ask for even a few crumbs of liberty, the whole nation feels itself insulted as a Virginia planter would have been by a similar request from his field hands. It is not that England is a worse sinner than other nations, all military powers have done the same. Even in America in Imperialism has begotten this vice. Thus an American minister declared that "we should thrash the Filipinos until they understand us" and that "every bullet sent, every cannon shot, every flag waved means righteousness." Hear in these words the authentic voice of Anglo-India. The officials

are now endeavouring to thrash the Nationalists "until they understand us."

Nor are Judges and Magistrates immune to the subtle passion of group suggestion. Again and again in the history of England and other countries have such men, whilst rigidly impartial in ordinary cases, whilst believing themselves actuated by lofty motives, succumbed miserably to the subtle urge of class prejudice. For instance in Charles's reign, the Judges, who belonged to the Royalist party, gave decision after decision in the King's favour. When witches or heretics were burnt, none so bigotted as those who administered justice. What savage sentences, too, they imposed on workmen in the earlier years of the nineteenth century, and on the Chartists! You may to-day see class suggestion quite plainly at work in the Courts

when Communionists are on trial. Touch the class feelings of the judge, and justice flees his court.

CHAPTER III

THE WAR-MIND OF SIMLA

Though the English have ruled India for over a century and a half they have as little amalgamated with the Indians as the Manchus with the Chinese. Foreigners they are and have ever been. Hence English group suggestion—a group suggestion quite diverse from that of the ruled—holds them in a grip as strong as if they lived in England, indeed in a stronger, for a dominant race scattered amongst a numerous conquered people is always peculiarly liable to panic, and panic, as we know, instantly raises group feelings to boiling point. The group acts

as one man and a barbarian at that. You may see this in the inhuman ferocity with which the Romans repressed the slave revolt under Spartacus. You may see it again in many incidents in the Southern States before the Civil War, and in the Jamacia atrocities under Governor Eyre. You may see it in the barbarity with which the English put down risings in Ireland, barbarities always loudly applauded by the English resident in that country. In Europe you have the intense class feeling of the old aristocracies in Germany, Austria and Russia, a feeling excited to frenzy by any effort for freedom, such as the French Jacqueries or the Peasants' Revolt in Germany. What is the inevitable conclusion from these and a hundred other examples?" They prove that *when a dominant class or nation lives amongst a subject people, the*

result is to dehumanise them. It is not that they are innately cruel; it is the unnatural surroundings in which they live which make them cruel. Owing to the nature of man's mind these surroundings would suffice, on occasion, to change him from a god to a very devil.

Now the British in India are not gods but men. Civilised and tolerant and kindly amongst themselves—especially when as in the Colonies there are no class distinction—once influenced by group panic, they revert to the barbarian as quickly as any other race. Conscious control and civilisation vanish and for the time being the Unconscious rules them as completely as it ruled the men who chipped flints or scraped mammoth bones in the caves of France. That was clearly seen after the Indian Mutiny. Throughout India frenzied

Anglo-Indians shouted proposals for vengeance worthy of a Sioux or an Iroquois. The deeds of the Spaniard Alva in the Netherlands were held up as an example for Englishmen in the nineteenth century. General Nicholson strongly urged that the Delhi murderers should be, not hanged, but *flayed alive*. The Viceroy, Lord Canning, was attacked with fury because, refusing to sate the lust for revenge, he took a more statesmanlike course. The passionate controversy round the Ilbert Bill is another case in point. Though the effect of that Bill was and could be but slight, since it entrenched on the privileges of the ruling class, they attacked it as though the end of the British *raj* in India was in sight.

At every step forward and with every movement for self-government India has resounded with the same clamour. The Anglo-Indian Press

and the non-official openly, the officials more discreetly, have risen up as one man against every measure or proposal for a measure which would jeopardise their supremacy and place the Indians, in the land of their birth, on an equality with them. Each of these agitations has been marked by the same features, the solidarity as in a buffalo herd of all white men, the urgent calls on the leaders to advance, a credulity which accepts blindly every rumour, a total refusal to listen to the Indian case, and a quick ascending note of fear or dislike. Everything in favour of the Indian is repressed or "forgotten." The Government of India has always yielded. Why should it not? It belongs to the same group as the other white men in India. It is therefore responsive to their voice and moved by their passions. *The incurable vice of*

a foreign government is that it responds to the suggestion of foreigners and not to the suggestion of the people of the land.

Is any nation good enough to rule another people? Be the ideals they profess never so exalted, you may be very sure that self-interest and group suggestion acting on their minds will so warp their judgment that what was begun in benevolence will end in tyranny. They belong to one group; the conquered or another; the suggestion, the racial urge in each case is different and antagonistic. When Lord Reading stated that British rule in India rests on British justice he gave his case away. *Justice there is between man and man, but when race or class interests are in question, justice there cannot be. It is a psychological impossibility.* Who did not smile when Mr. Lloyd George, arguing for

the extradition of the Kaiser, affirmed that, before a tribunal composed of men from enemy nations, he would have "justice, stern justice?" Well, Indians, when their interests clash with those of the ruling class, have just as much chance of justice as the Kaiser would have had. Not merely is the government judge of its own case; it is subject to the all-powerful influence of a different race suggestion.

And remember the racial poison does not stop with the executive officers. If precedents in British and other countries teach anything, if psychology is other than a vain myth, the taint is bound to spread to the judicial officers. They may honestly believe themselves impartial, and that they do not strain the law or the evidence against the accused, but deep in their unconscious minds the racial

bias works. The fiercer the outbreak of racial passion, the stronger the suggestion in the Unconscious. They cannot escape it.

The present position may be put in a nutshell. In spite of docility taught in the schools, preached by the government, and enforced by officials, India has resolved to be free. The idea of liberty, the passion for self-government has penetrated the remotest village from Kashmere to Comorin. It is not a question of a small party, of an intelligentia. It is a question of a nation, 300 millions strong. It is their will against the will of the foreign bureaucracy. The clash has come as it was bound to come. The bureaucracy is strengthened and its will for power reinforced by racial suggestion both from the Anglo-Indians and from the governing classes in England. As was inevitable the war-mind possesses

it. To expect it to hearken to argument or entreaty is therefore to cry for the moon. Once the war-mind possesses a class or nation you might as well attempt to reason with it as attempt to reason with a must elephant. The Unconscious has seized the reins and the Unconscious of an excited class or nation laughs at reason, justice and good faith and all the ideals of civilization.

One thing alone it is sensitive—to *fear*. On the plea of expediency it may grant things which it would never yield to justice. The supplications of Moderates, therefore, will however well reasoned, will be refused, politely no doubt but none the less definitely. But the fear that if it pursues in its course of repression and political persecution, it may put in jeopardy every tie that binds India to Great Britain, the dread of a settled

hostility in all the countless hosts of India, these may force the Simla Government to call a halt.

The genius of Mahatma Gandhi has decided that the movement for National freedom shall be peaceful, and he has thus baffled the military party in Anglo-India, burning to make use of the last inventions in the way of aeroplanes, machine-guns, rifles and cannon. By the very fact, too, of repressing the natural impulse to violence of an oppressed nation, he has strengthened and stabilised the will for freedom. For violence, even if momentarily successful, brings reaction; a restrained passion by the very nature of the restraint becomes as iron and granite for strength. Behold, a will which never knows defeat.

On the wise and statesmanlike lines adopted let India, then, go forward. Let Indians unite still further hand-in-

hand, let each race, religion join itself to others with bands of love, let every Indian *without exception* enlist in the national cause, and follow without flinching the behests of the national leader. So will they form a nation so irresistable in strength, so united in heart, so firm in their resolve for liberty, that the foreign bureaucracy, however reluctantly, must yield, and yielding unbar the gates which tyranny has locked. Then will India pass through into the Promised Land, like Ireland a Free State, Mistress in her own house, an equal nation amongst the nations of the earth.

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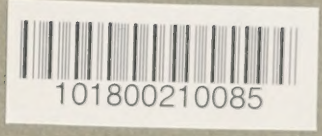
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